

The Brower House  
50 Paterson Street  
Little Falls, Passaic County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Brower House  
50 Paterson Street  
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Owner: Estate of William H. Brower

Date of Erection: Circa 1825

Architect:

Builder: Henry G. Van Ness (died 1839)

Present Condition: Very good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half with cellar

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - dressed  
and coursed brownstone  
from local quarries

Interior walls - lath  
and plaster on studding  
and on stone

Chimneys - stone, built  
into inside of end walls

Roof - low pitched gable  
on center unit, one slope  
on wings, all metal roofing

Historical Data:

By a deed of 8 November 1809, Abraham F. Speer and wife Sally, of Caldwell Township, Essex County, conveyed to John Yorks of Acquackanonk Township, in the same county for \$450 a "certain small lot of land at Peckmans River in the said county, in the corner of the road, the one leading from Little Falls to the Notch, the other running to the Town of Paterson", containing 1.44 acres, reciting title from John Speer Jr. and wife Lidia by their

deed of 10 March 1807, also another lot there "at the forks of the road leading to the landing and the road leading to Paterson", containing two acres, and reciting title from John Yorks and wife Polly by their deed of 27 May 1807.

Acquackanonk Township was taken from Essex County in 1837 with parts of Bergen County to form Passaic, and Little Falls Township was created from it in 1868. Peckamin's River mentioned above flows through the center of this new township and into the Passaic River between the village of Little Falls and the City of Paterson. The property conveyed in the deeds cited is now within that village, the house facing northward to the Turnpike and overlooking the Morris and Essex Canal (which was built in 1829) and further, the Passaic River.

John Yorks the grantee abovenamed, with his wife Polly Yorks, by deed of 9 October 1821 conveyed to Henry G. Van Ness also of Acquackanonk, for \$400, the same two lots describing them as bounded "south by the public highway from the Little Falls to the Landing", and a triangular third lot of 1.4 acres on the southeast side of the "new road from Benjamin Dubous to the aforesaid road" bounded south by Abraham F. Speer's house lot and east by land of Peter Zelliff, apparently adjacent to the first two lots. During the ownership of this land by Henry G. Van Ness, the house here considered was erected thereon about 1825 as its architecture indicates. The Van Ness Brothers were early merchants in the village.(a)

The administrators of the estate of this Henry Van Ness deceased conveyed this property on 26 October 1839 to his son Evert H. Van Ness, and the executors of the estate of the latter conveyed it on 5 November 1864 to William Brower, who held the property until his death on 24 March 1899. The map of the village of Little Falls published in the Atlas

(a) Clayton, History of Bergen and Passaic Counties, 1882 p. 566

of Passaic County by E. B. Hyde & Company of New York (no date, about 1876) shows this house (and another one eastward) on the lot bounded north by the Turnpike road (Paterson Street), east by Maple Street and south by a lot of J. Van Ness extending along that street to Main Street.

After the death of Mary Brower, the widow, the property was conveyed on 23 March 1920 to the son William H. Brower, and the 1939 tax list for the village shows it as being lot number 9 in block number 87 and owned by the estate of William Brower. The map shows this lot as being the western half of the one described above.

#### Architectural Analysis:

The design and details of this unusual house mark it as a minor but early example of the work inspired by the Greek Revival fashion of 1815-1850. From the ends of the central two story unit of 23 feet 6 inches front by 32 feet 5 inches depth, and in line with its rear wall, extend two practically symmetrical wings, about 17 feet square. The resulting balance in composition and the employment of large scale dressed brownstone in coursed ashlar for the front facades give an effect of careful formality in vogue at the time of erection, but this house lacks the great front portico of columns featured in the most important examples of the period. The elevation of the two wings by the addition of a second story room to each soon after completion, as indicated by the blocking of windows in the end walls of the central unit, unfortunately reduces the dominance of the latter in the originally perhaps better composition of masses. This house is a remarkable example of the combination of floor plan traditional to the Dutch families in this region with elevations modern in style at the time of erection.

From the deeply recessed stone lintelled front entrance composed of a single door with glass transom and side lights, the stairhall extends along the windowless east gable end wall of the central unit to a rear exit, a passage door in the partition to the right giving into the front living room and another to the dining room behind it. Opposite these doors in each of the two chambers a fireplace built into the gable end wall exhibits the wood pilastered mantel unadorned by any carving, a design very common in the plainest work of the period. The one in the dining room is flanked by a door to a closet and by one to the room in the west wing. This latter room, like the kitchen in the symmetrical east wing contains a fireplace in the outer end wall, an interesting triple window in one frame set in the front, and an exit door in the rear wall. In the corner and adjoining the fireplace in the kitchen is the bricklined bake oven designed in the traditional manner of the Dutch. The iron door is embossed with the names of the makers Whitney & Montanya, Peekskill, New York. The oven is cleverly fitted with a concealed vent to the chimney of the fireplace and with an ash-chute sloping down to the hearth.

The plan of the second floor repeats the arrangement of rooms in that of the first with exception of a partition across the front end of the stairhall to form a very small room. The flues from the fireplace in the front bedroom and from the two in the rooms below ascend diagonally to unite in the one chimney which is centered at the ridge line in the east gable end wall. The upper room in each of the two

subordinate wings is without access to those of the central unit being reached by its own stairway.

Bibliography:

A search of Essex and Passaic Counties  
Land and Probate records by Joseph  
Benenati, H. A. B. S. title abstractor

Lewis D. Cook  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
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District Officer